

Article 18.

Political Parties.

§ 163A-950. "Political party" defined; creation of new party.

(a) Definition. – A political party within the meaning of the election laws of this State shall be one of the following:

- (1) Any group of voters which, at the last preceding general State election, polled for its candidate for Governor, or for presidential electors, at least two percent (2%) of the entire vote cast in the State for Governor or for presidential electors.
- (2) Any group of voters which shall have filed with the State Board petitions for the formulation of a new political party which are signed by registered and qualified voters in this State equal in number to one-quarter of one percent (0.25%) of the total number of voters who voted in the most recent general election for Governor. Also the petition must be signed by at least 200 registered voters from each of three congressional districts in North Carolina. To be effective, the petitioners must file their petitions with the State Board before 12:00 noon on the first day of June preceding the day on which is to be held the first general State election in which the new political party desires to participate. The State Board shall forthwith determine the sufficiency of petitions filed with it and shall immediately communicate its determination to the State chair of the proposed new political party.
- (3) Any group of voters which shall have filed with the State Board documentation that the group of voters had a candidate nominated by that group on the general election ballot of at least seventy percent (70%) of the states in the prior Presidential election. To be effective, the group must file their documentation with the State Board before 12:00 noon on the first day of June preceding the day on which is to be held the first general State election in which the new political party desires to participate. The State Board shall forthwith verify the documentation filed with it and shall immediately communicate its determination to the State chair of the proposed new political party.

(b) Petitions for New Political Party. – Petitions for the creation of a new political party shall contain on the heading of each page of the petition in bold print or all in capital letters the words: "THE UNDERSIGNED REGISTERED VOTERS IN ____ COUNTY HEREBY PETITION FOR THE FORMATION OF A NEW POLITICAL PARTY TO BE NAMED ____ AND WHOSE STATE CHAIRMAN IS _____, RESIDING AT _____ AND WHO CAN BE REACHED BY TELEPHONE AT ____."

All printing required to appear on the heading of the petition shall be in type no smaller than 10 point or in all capital letters, double spaced typewriter size. In addition to the form of the petition, the organizers and petition circulators shall inform the signers of the general purpose and intent of the new party.

The petitions must specify the name selected for the proposed political party. The State Board shall reject petitions for the formation of a new party if the name chosen contains any word that appears in the name of any existing political party recognized in this State or if, in the State Board's opinion, the name is so similar to that of an existing political party recognized in this State as to confuse or mislead the voters at an election.

The petitions must state the name and address of the State chairman of the proposed new political party.

(c) Each petition shall be presented to the chairman of the board of elections of the county in which the signatures were obtained, and it shall be the chairman's duty:

- (1) To examine the signatures on the petition and place a check mark on the petition by the name of each signer who is qualified and registered to vote in his county.
- (2) To attach to the petition his signed certificate
 - a. Stating that the signatures on the petition have been checked against the registration records and
 - b. Indicating the number found qualified and registered to vote in his county.
- (3) To return each petition, together with the certificate required by the preceding subdivision, to the person who presented it to him for checking.

The group of petitioners shall submit the petitions to the chairman of the county board of elections in the county in which the signatures were obtained no later than 5:00 P.M. on the fifteenth day preceding the date the petitions are due to be filed with the State Board as provided in subsection [subdivision] (a)(2) of this section. Provided the petitions are timely submitted, the chairman of the county board of elections shall proceed to examine and verify the signatures under the provisions of this subsection. Verification shall be completed within two weeks from the date such petitions are presented. (1901, c. 89, s. 85; Rev., s. 4292; 1915, c. 101, s. 31; 1917, c. 218; C.S., ss. 5913, 6052; 1933, c. 165, ss. 1, 17; 1949, c. 671, ss. 1, 2; 1967, c. 775, s. 1; 1975, c. 179; 1979, c. 411, s. 3; 1981, c. 219, ss. 1-3; 1983, c. 576, ss. 1-3; 1997-456, s. 27; 1999-424, s. 5(a); 2004-127, s. 14; 2006-234, s. 1; 2017-6, s. 3; 2017-214, s. 1.)

§ 163A-951. Termination of status as political party.

When any political party fails to meet the test set forth in G.S. 163A-950(a)(1), it shall cease to be a political party within the meaning of the primary and general election laws and all other provisions of this Subchapter. (1901, c. 89, s. 85; Rev., s. 4292; C.S., s. 5913; 1933, c. 165, s. 1; 1949, c. 671, s. 1; 1967, c. 775, s. 1; 2006-234, s. 2; 2017-6, s. 3.)

§ 163A-952. Voters affiliated with expired political party.

The State Board shall be authorized to promulgate appropriate procedures to order the county boards of elections to change the registration affiliation of all voters who are recorded on the voter registration books as being affiliated with a political party which has lost its legal status as provided in G.S. 163A-951. The State Board shall not implement the authority contained in this section earlier than 90 days following the certification of the election in which the political party failed to continue its legal status as provided in G.S. 163A-951. All voters affiliated with such expired political party shall be changed to "unaffiliated designation" by the State Board's order and all such registrants shall be entitled to declare a political party affiliation as provided in G.S. 163A-881. (1975, c. 789; 1977, c. 408, s. 1; 2004-127, s. 10; 2017-6, s. 3.)

§ 163A-953. General election participation by new political party.

In the first general election following the date on which a new political party qualifies under the provisions of G.S. 163A-950, it shall be entitled to have the names of its candidates for national, State, congressional, and local offices printed on the official ballots upon paying a filing fee equal to that provided for candidates for the office in G.S. 163A-979 or upon complying with the alternative available to candidates for the office in G.S. 163A-980.

For the first general election following the date on which it qualifies under G.S. 163A-950, a new political party shall select its candidates by party convention. An individual whose name appeared on the ballot in a primary election preliminary to the general election shall not be eligible to have that individual's name placed on the general election ballot as a candidate for the new political party for the same office in that year. Following adjournment of the nominating convention, but not later than the first day of July prior to the general election, the president of the convention shall certify to the State Board the names of persons chosen in the convention as the new party's candidates in the ensuing general election. Any candidate nominated by a new party shall be affiliated with the party at the time of certification to the State Board. The requirement of affiliation with the party will be met if the candidate submits at or before the time of certification as a candidate an application to change party affiliation to that party. The State Board shall print names thus certified on the appropriate ballots as the nominees of the new party. The State Board shall send to each county board of elections the list of any new party candidates so that the county board can add those names to the appropriate ballot. (1901, c. 89, s. 85; Rev., s. 4292; C.S., s. 5913; 1933, c. 165, s. 1; 1949, c. 671, s. 1; 1967, c. 775, s. 1; 1979, c. 411, s. 4; 2002-159, s. 55(b); 2006-234, s. 3; 2008-150, s. 10.1(a); 2017-6, s. 3; 2018-13, s. 3.4.)

§ 163A-954. Use of schools and other public buildings for political meetings.

The governing authority having control over schools or other public buildings which have facilities for group meetings, or where polling places are located, is hereby authorized and directed to permit the use of such buildings without charge, except custodial and utility fees, by political parties, as defined in G.S. 163A-950, for the express purpose of annual or biennial precinct meetings and county and district conventions. Provided, that the use of such buildings by political parties shall not be permitted at times when school is in session or which would interfere with normal school activities or functions normally carried on in such school buildings, and such use shall be subject to reasonable rules and regulations of the school boards and other governing authorities. (1975, c. 465; 1983, c. 519, ss. 1, 2; 2017-6, s. 3.)

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